

## Christine Taylor looks back at August for the **Climate Camp 2007 photo exhibition.**

Woken just before 5am on a Sunday morning by the chugging of a police van's diesel engine, it slowly dawned on me: "Bloody hell! Climate Camp must be HERE!"

Ever since climate change activists announced they were coming to Heathrow, there'd been endless speculation about where the camp would be sited. Wherever it was, I'd always intended to go; never had any doubt. How could you ignore a group of people coming to support the campaign that had dominated your life for so many years? Watching them arrive on that beautiful summer morning was exhilarating.

It came at a time when the campaign against the third runway needed a boost. Local people had battled against expansion plans for years, mostly with passive petitions, polite letters and a little genteel placard waving. It wasn't until 2002, when hundreds of homes were threatened, that the No Third Runway Action Group (NoTRAG) was formed. Yet we were still playing by the rules, while BAA and the government appeared to be planning to move the goalposts.

As if that wasn't enough, in July BAA sought an injunction against a number of individuals and groups, including NoTRAG. BAA had hoped this would slip straight through the courts unchallenged but, having targeted five million environmentalists and aimed for an injunction for an indefinite period, the judge decided otherwise.

NoTRAG was found to have no case to answer and we were awarded full costs, yet we didn't celebrate; we shouldn't have been taken to court in the first place and it had absorbed our precious time and energy. At least BAA had given several protest groups and The Camp for Climate Action more publicity than they could ever have dreamt of.

Immediately afterwards NoTRAG was thrown into a debate about the rights and wrongs of supporting Climate Camp, which had publicised direct action. We did our homework and, in the end, trusted our instincts.

On visits to the camp, we plugged into the enthusiasm and energy. With police stationed at every entrance to the fields and roads around the camp, we heard stories of villagers being too afraid to cross police lines – but even body searches couldn't put us off. One local man even set up a "Sipson Tent", which became our base. It was invigorating to visit a place where such a diverse population seemed happy fighting a common cause.

The Press, with visits onto the camp rationed, were clamouring to speak to locals. Our 'phones were buzzing all day, with a small group of us fielding calls, ringing volunteers willing to be interviewed and generally co-operating with everyone to get maximum publicity for our campaign, while making sure our policy on illegal action was clear.

If I have any regrets, it's that I couldn't spend longer just walking around and marvelling at how people could live so well in what had been an expanse of rough grasses. I wish I could have attended more workshops or maybe just relaxed. At times it was hard work but worth it; NoTRAG got international coverage. Foreign news crews told us of anti-expansion groups in their own countries, all interested in Sipson's survival.

It was a week of amazing, memorable moments. You really had to have been there – but photographs help recapture the mood. Like watching protesters on the final Sunday and noticing that Linda, the NoTRAG secretary who'd campaigned with me for years, had tears in her eyes too. I get emotional just looking at Mike Russell's photo of us.